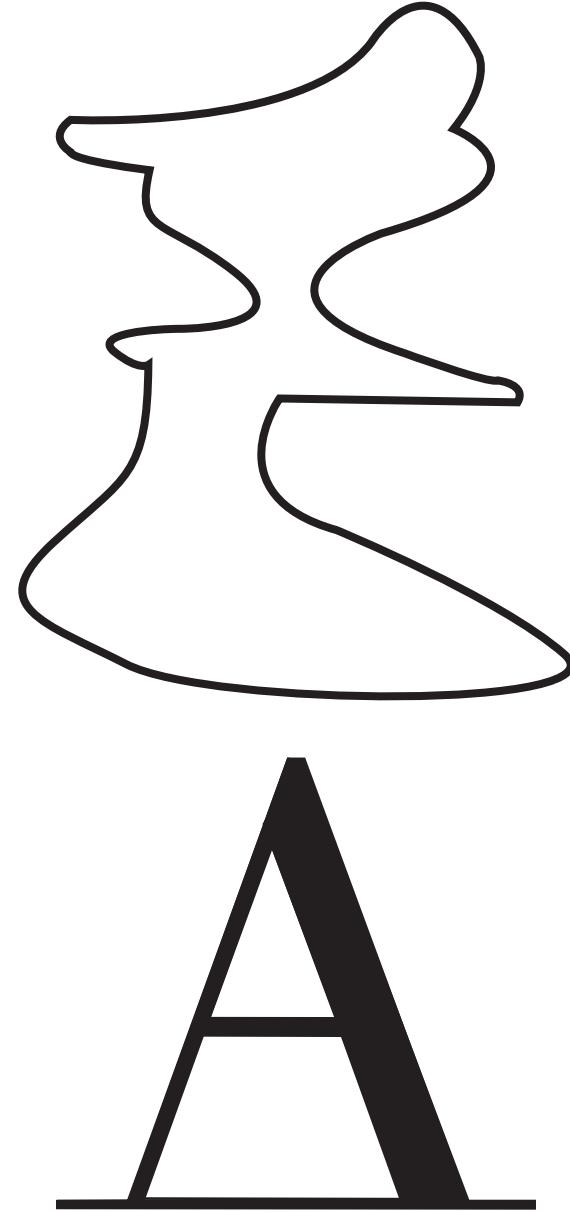


We encourage the sabotage of art prize and the gentrification of Grand Rapids through a diversity of tactics. Some examples would be subversive art (during and after art prize), occupation of spaces (i.e. exhibition centers and main venues), making participants/wealthy consumers feel uncomfortable, and other forms of mischief. Outside of the artprize boundary, start building community through projects like community gardens, block associations, cop-watches, and other forms of collective resistance.

We stand in solidarity with the workers who are affected by artprize, and the artists who have entered independantly.

Together we can reverse the impact artprize has, and will have, on our neighborhoods, communities, and the art-world.



against artprize

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I digress.....The artprize exhibition centers will exemplify what the BOB and other sites did last year; provide lots of attention to a handful of pieces and overshadow other entries in different locations. The attention and importance implied by naming certain places 'exhibition' centers cheapens the Artprize contest.

I wonder which artists will be in this year's top ten?

Surely none from any of the exhibition centers.....

Artprize brings out some of the best art and talent Grand Rapids sees all year long. Extravagant materials and techniques are apparent in some pieces, while others use found materials with simple techniques to create one-of-a-kind pieces of art. Are the mediums and techniques solely the choice of the artist, or are some artists allotted more expensive materials and more possibilities in the name of some capitalistic pursuit?

The answer is made obvious by strolling through the artprize venues and exhibition centers and simply observing the art and its surroundings. Corporate funding is prevalent in a lot of the art in ArtPrize. Corporations donate materials to certain artists in order for the artists to have everything that they need to create amazing pieces of art. The one stipulation for such funding is the need for the corporations to have their name or logo somewhere near the finished piece of art; after all they did pay for the art to be there right? The corporate funding of art is blasphemous to a competition that is considered fair and open to all artists.

I wonder which artists will be in this year's top ten?

Surely none who have corporate sponsorship...

Corporate funding and special exhibition centers are just two ways that make the Artprize competition unfair to the participants as well as the voters. Think about that when you are voting for an extravagant piece of art with a corporate logo or when you are texting a vote next to a lot of other people in an exhibition site. Is your vote being manipulated in some way and how is it affecting the contest and our community?

fArtPrize Mania!

Let's define artprize. The definition given in the Grand Rapids Press and other major media outlets, is largely positive: an art competition that is free to the public, and even promotes democracy and community as the only major art competition that lets the public choose the winners by voting.

We reject this definition. We redefine artprize as a competition that is made to promote capitalism/corporate business; a gentrifying force in our community; a three week spectacle that does more harm to the local art community than good.

The main goal of artprize is not to promote art – local or otherwise. Rather, the intention is to bring in business to downtown. This fact is not hidden – Rick

DeVos (founder of artprize; Grand Rapids royalty) himself has stated that exact goal of artprize on multiple occasions. Business owners within the two mile radius of artprize look forward to a profitable three weeks; wage slaves employed by these owners look forward to the possibility of a living wage for once (those who earn tips, at least), but dread the long hours and hard work.

Those in the area who are without home, who rely on Heartside area shelters and kitchens such as Degage ministries, are forced out of the area by police, who work not for the community, but for the business owners who want downtown Grand Rapids to look pretty for artprize (read: rich, and mostly white).

In the short term, folks could easily die during artprize, as the weather turns cold and the fascist pigs force people out of downtown, without providing an alternative.

In the long term, artprize encourages the ever-increasing gentrification of downtown. It brings in young, privileged bohemian art types, who make the area “nicer,” (read: whiter), drive up property values, encourage more rich white people to move there, and folks who have lived in the same area for years are displaced from their homes and communities. This has certainly gone on long before artprize – we make no claims of artprize as the sole responsible entity – but it certainly contributes greatly to this fucked up trend.

Meanwhile, local art is pushed to the side, as corporate-sponsored artists dominate the competition, and artprize becomes simply one more medium for corporations to bombard us with advertisements.

The purpose of this zine is to elaborate on the points above, as well as to promote alternative ways to celebrate local art during artprize, and to encourage direct action. If artprize makes you as angry as it makes us, then do whatever you feel comfortable doing to stop it – occupy space, disrupt the flow of the competition, steal from downtown businesses, etc.

artprize: Not a Fair Competition.

The founders and organizers of artprize consider this contest to be a fair and open competition to all participants, but the reality is a skewed from their ideal. How can a contest be fair when certain participants are given a clear advantage over other participants? Selection of artists for different venues and corporate sponsorship of artists and materials give certain artprize entries an extra boost in the right direction towards winning the ultimate artprize.

A new twist of official ArtPrize Exhibition Centers has been added to the 2010 Artprize competition. Now there are seven official spots in the official ArtPrize zone (excluding the Fredrick Meijer Garden Exhibition Center which shouldn't be considered a real Artprize site because it is far outside of the the official Artprize radius) where one can find a plethora of art. More attention will obviously be drawn to these seven venues, which will leave art at other sites not deemed “exhibition” centers with less attention over all.

A shuttle, or ArtBus, will be provided to get people with special wristbands from one exhibition center to the next in order to get “More people, see more art, in more neighborhoods (artprize.org, 2010).” The Artprize website proclaims that people with wristbands can ride the shuttle and Rapid buses for ‘free’ during artprize. How can this service be considered free when one must pay a fee in order to obtain this service?

capitalism.

The Art Prize; A Seismic Incentive

Our environment shapes the way we think, behave and interact. When a given culture encumbers us, we are subjects of it. Everything we do under this pretense is directly and indirectly a product of this subjection. We are pawns in a game of what could, can, or is popular. Things like television, mainstream internet, and the radio put working class people in a position of choice. Do you support one artist or another? We are offered no alternatives, and the creation of indie alternatives offers nothing but another instance of the same capitalist culture.

So where do we escape? Can we create environments/ situations inside of this culture that transcend it? We cannot say, as this zine was written under the same pretense. Art, in literal and psychological forms, will always perpetuate the systems it was created in.

Artprize is no different. Most works you are enjoying were created under the influence of the prize money. And this is the standard of art? Prize-worthy works funded by capitalists like Amway, Varnum, DeVoss and Van Andel. Not to mention the situations businesses are hosting work in. Can you enjoy a work when you know you are being encouraged to buy pizza slice A or insurance plan B? Is this the environment we should be accepting, tantalizing, and even competing in?

Gentrification & artprize

Gentrification: the buying and renovation of houses and stores in deteriorated urban neighborhoods by upper- or middle-income families or individuals, thus improving property values but often displacing low-income families and small businesses. – dictionary.com

Anyone who's lived in Grand Rapids in the last couple of years can testify that the city is undergoing a substantial change. "Urban renewal" is what they're calling it, the new lofts on Division, the fancy restaurants on Wealthy, the replacement of people of color in neighborhoods with white college kids. It is the process of displacing the poor from all visible points of the city with yuppies and hipsters. That is what's happening, it's apparent even in their clever choice of wording. Renewal means to be made new, to give it a new look, to make it all clean and shiny; to get rid of what's been plaguing it and making it look bad. Homeless people don't drive up property values, that's for sure. And working class people don't drop fifty bucks at the B.O.B. a couple nights a week. Luckily for and thanks to those privileged folk at the top, the people who this society has been structured to protect and aid, that's all changing.

It's changing because of the process of gentrification, the title that "urban renewal" is supposed to replace and make positive. It isn't positive though, it is one of the many interwoven processes of capitalism that benefit the rich at the expense of everyone else. How gentrification works is complicated. Basically an area in a

city consisting of working class people, especially people of color, is slowly transformed. Generally it begins with hipsters, white middle-class suburbanites who are obsessed with irony and “indie” music. Seeking somewhere different from the suburbs where they grew up, they have a tendency to move into an area mostly consisting of people of color. To them that’s “real,” far different than the sterile suburbs they grew up in. Unlike the original inhabitants of the neighborhood, hipsters usually have rich parents, and are possibly rich themselves. Even if they don’t, the fact that they’re young, white, and articulate gives them an added edge over poor people in finding jobs and apartments, as well as being left alone by cops. Regardless, how easy they will spend their money leads to real estate and businesses seizing profitable opportunities to start up bars, restaurants, and stores specifically tailored to them. Even when the neighborhoods consist of only a few hipsters you will still find the streets filled with fancy restaurants and hip bars designed to draw more in.

As they slowly invade a neighborhood all the capital that’s come in starts driving property values up. As property values rise rent prices do in turn. Meanwhile yuppies and professionals who live nearby make it a point to drive to the city to check out these new restaurants and the city in general. Where before they would never drive to an area full of working class people and people of color, seeing young white kids wearing skinny jeans walking around as well as fancy bars makes going to the city an event that they cherish. Eventually they start moving into the neighborhoods. Hipsters may have spare cash, but they have virtually nothing compared to white collar professionals. Expensive businesses start opening up around town and by this time the businesses run by the original inhabitants are all gone. Rent prices are swollen to a level that’s far too high for working class people to afford and they are driven out of the neighborhood. They are pushed into the outskirts of the city, to the marginalized areas that haven’t been “developed” or “renewed” yet. Homeless people

the viewpoint of our peers, is meant to be based on a material wealth and sophisticated taste for the arts. Usually, this wealth manifests higher levels of classiness with higher prices. The “fine arts” are saved for the upper-class people with the money to afford supporting an artist, who, in turn, creates art for such a transaction. This is the production of culture, and specifically, the culture of the bourgeoisie (which is, arguably, the standard of all culture to come).

When an artist makes a living selling their art, they become stationary. The art becomes a product. The people who buy these products are the people privileged enough to spend the extra cash on an instance of our culture. As a capitalist economy, artists are pitted against one another (as with every sector of production) in a constant state of competition. Even before they begin creating, the artist is under the influence of career pressures, financial burdens, and an unsatisfied kind of boredom. They “spend” time creating art instead of producing goods for an employer. We find that when art can be created to make money, in the same way labour-hours can be sold to make money; creation becomes a kind of labour.

What does our economy play into this? Capitalism is a kind of economy where you are paid for your labour in an establishment by an owner. They own the machinery, the tools, the material(s), and your labour. You depend on this to pay for your life. This master-servant dynamic is wage slavery.

When a worker decides to create art instead of be a wage slave, thus paying for life with a “commission”, they are subjected to art as a mode of culture. They must create within strict standards in order to market to consumers. Just like any other product, as more and more consumers are pleased with an artists’ work, the artist becomes popular. Thus, they are marketable. Capitalist pigs approach the artist and promise a successful business relationship. The creator creates and the business-person sells. When they reach the top, homes and businesses across the world host their works. Their efforts have created a culture of

The business man says yes, as he signs the dotted line under a contractual agreement to sponsor artists of his choosing in his restaurant over the next few weeks. Visitors from all over the world come to Grand Rapids for the largest art-prize on the planet. The art-industry of downtown Grand Rapids is exemplified in a competition where artists contribute a piece for a commercial space to display and for “the public” to ultimately decide who wins. Artists and collectors from all over the world travel to Grand Rapids to vote on the winning piece(s). The winning artist will be awarded \$250,000 (for 1st), and a permanent spot in art-history books. As for the business owners, the entertainment of the Grand Rapids middle class, and the remaining hundred-thousands of artists, artprize is a multi-million bodied audience and all the foot traffic the venues can handle.

Art-Industry

Artists (at least the American sense of the word) commit to creating works for the enjoyment of an audience. They write music, take photos, paint pictures, carve wood, build fancy towers, decorate walls, sculpt stone, and cut paper to insist an experience for the observer. When an artist becomes popular, the possibility of revenue emerges. Often times, when an artist is making money selling their art, the art is, in some way, generalized into culture as a whole. It becomes culture. What we will remember looking back on our lives and what generations after us will remember about our “art” will be from the highest paid artists in the industry.

Whether you are buying a photograph of an abundant mountain-scape to create a peaceful atmosphere for your customers, or you’re buying a sculpted fountain to spruce-up the backyard during the spring months, what determines what looks “calming” or “fancy” is a tradition of consumerism. We must obtain and possess the most elegant, the most extraordinary, and the most popular items we can afford. Our accord, from the

and panhandlers are forcibly removed by police so they don’t bother the yuppies and decrease investor interest in the area. Even the hipsters at this point may be forced to move out, to a new neighborhood of people of color that will soon be gentrified or to a “student ghetto.” By the end of the cycle the area is polished clean, filled with professional yuppies whose corporate jobs are in some way perpetuating the forces of capitalism that have enriched and privileged them to the cost of everyone else.

When this happens you have unequal everything. Poor areas are given shit money for schools because of low tax revenue. They become “food deserts” in that supermarkets are much more inclined to open up shop near rich people who have money to spend while poor folk are forced to get their food from gas stations, party stores, and fast food. Police, who owe their existence to protecting private property, will be slow to responding to calls from low-income areas; but quick to harass, monitor, and arrest poor people who are easy targets without money for lawyers. Corporations will take advantage of their poverty by dumping their dangerous pollution in municipalities that are strapped for cash, leaving the inhabitants with asbestos poisoning and asthma, as happens in poor cities with coal mines.

And despite the line they give the most (i.e. the grand rapids press), the city does NOT benefit from the process of gentrification. Crime still exists the same as it did before, it’s just focused entirely in the poor areas. Unemployment and poverty are the exact same as before, you just don’t see it if you live in the gentrified neighborhoods. The beneficiaries of gentrification are the ruling class of that area, those that own the businesses, property, banks, and restaurants in the heart of the city. They get rich from the influx of yuppies and hipsters. The working class get nothing but booted.

So that’s the general tendency of how gentrification happens. And then there’s ArtPrize. The purpose of having this contest, this spectacle per se, is to speed up the process of gentrification in Grand Rapids. Think about who goes to Grand Rapids,

and what they do when they're there. Middle class people from around the country come to Grand Rapids these weeks specifically to view the art and check out the city. Obviously people from the city do too, many of them working class. But the point, the purpose of ArtPrize is to bring in as much money into the city as possible. The money is spent at restaurants and bars, giving the owners an influx of cash. One of the safest thing for rich people to do with more money is to invest it in more capital. The owners of the businesses in Grand Rapids use this money to create more businesses that are meant to bring in and retain more rich people.

Meanwhile, during ArtPrize the city is on lock down. Un desirable people, those that make the city look bad to investors and yuppies, are being forced out for these few weeks. Last year police went to Degage Ministries and told the workers there to let the homeless people know that they will be arrested for "loitering." This year already the city has removed the benches and chairs across from Degage on Cherry and Division, an area that homeless people are always occupying. Now with the majority of soup kitchens and shelters within the ArtPrize city limits, and police on orders to remove them from public sight, they don't have places to eat or sleep.

If it isn't clear already then I'll emphasize that working people do NOT benefit from ArtPrize, or gentrification in general. There aren't "new jobs" in the sense that a higher percent of people will be employed. The increase in businesses matches the increase in inhabitants of the city. Jobs are created but only for the people who move in. When a yuppie restaurant, say Electric Cheetah comes into the neighborhood, they don't hire the people who lived in the city originally. They hire the hipsters, the bright white faces that yuppies want to see waiting tables for them.

The Culture Of Capitalism

Art has always been a unifying force. The way we work, socialize, travel, and relax is always under the influence of some sort of art. It rules our interests, opinions, and emotions. Your mental process is constantly being modified and shaped into a universal understanding of the world around you. How you behave and interact within this understanding over the course of your life isn't up to you. This is the nature of culture, an abstract flow of traditions, beliefs, routines and systems passed from one group to another through time and distance. Who disseminates them, and how and why they flow is predetermined by the entrepreneurs of "the arts".

The culture of capitalism, that is, the systematic notion of "I" before "us" is just the false dichotomy I am talking about. Under capitalist economy, wealth is concentrated to a small group of elite men who, in due time, accord to accumulate as much wealth as possible so that they, and their direct communities (other rich, white men) can live a life of luxury while we (the working class) produce the goods they market and profit from. Modern culture is an immense accumulation of these goods. So can art, as a mode of culture, be "produced" in a setting where the motivation and benefit are purely for either an employer or personal financial gain? Is this the way we want our traditions, beliefs, routines and thoughts shaped; to formulate a view of this world from the perspective of the top?